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FANFARE

BY BURTON RASCOE

Pour être un bon critique il faut avoir une forte personnalité — REMY DE GOURMONT.

I

When H. L. Mencken unpacks his idiomatic brasses, tunes up his verbal strings, and gets in readiness his phrasal woodwinds to orchestrate a fugue in damnation or in praise of man, god or book, his all too meagre audience cancels all other engagements to be on hand at the initial presentation. The result, that audience knows, will be an experience of pure enjoyment. His musicianship is unfailing. His program is unsatisfactory only in its impermanence. Though the theme he proposes is invariably Mencken — Mencken apropos of this or that — he gives it infinite and intricate variations.

It is, then, as an artist in words that Mr. Mencken is first to be considered. He has the true marks of a stylist: a rich and varied vocabulary and an aptitude for connotation. The baldly obvious, the commonplace in expression, are to him impossible. If he possesses an illusion, it is that word arrangements matter. In the employment of hackneyed, lifeless similes, down-at-the-heel metaphors, and shopworn nouns and adjectives, he sees a dull intellect plodding pathetically along, redeemed only if it express with dubious clarity a new or vital idea. Knowing that the style is the man and that any one who has something definite to express gives to it naturally a form that commands attention in itself, he respects the manner as much as the content, cultivates the gipsy phrase in his own compositions, and values it in the work of others.

He is distinctly aware. He dwells in no ivory tower, aloof and austere. The whole process of daily life in this republic, its utterly serious concern with fallacies and foibles, its flatulent popular idols, its puerile preferences in literature, art, politics, amusements and moral schemes, its lusty and pretentious *vulgus*, its self-styled *intelligenza*, all furnish him with ammunition for his critical *mitrailleuse*. He reads everything that has a bearing upon the life about him, from the latest bad novel to the latest papal bull, and from handbills to decisions of the Supreme Court. His vivid combinations, his apt coinages of words are traceable to a close observation and appraisal of daily affairs. Add a nimble and often grotesque imagination and you have the formula of his style — the most vigorous, the most individual, and the most frequently imitated in this country. He owes much of it to his early studies of Nietzsche. It has the slash, the incisiveness, and the gusto of the apothegmatic “Will to Power.” It is the style of a satirist and humourist of a high order, one equal to compact and devastating epithets. It moves with an irregular tempo, replete with dissonances. It is imagistic, colourful, dynamic.

II

American literature has been, and is, singularly deficient in established critics who have anything like a rational conception of their jobs. The majority, initiate in a few of the patent rituals of Aristotle and Quintilian, don the forbidding robes of high priests to Sweetness and Light, and go about their business much as if the idea were to keep all they know to themselves.

The æsthetic criteria of these Neo-Boussets are the pulpit criteria of the early nineteenth century. They are unaware that psychologists long ago made a division between ethical values and reactions to æsthetic stimuli. One of the chief among them is aghast at Sainte-Beuve’s catholicity of taste and

sheds a righteous tear of regret that the great Frenchman was not a family man and a Scotch Presbyterian. Another — whose flare for discovering a new Balzac in every third pot-boiler who sends him a novel and whose genius for being quoted on the ash cans of the publishing alleys make him probably the most sinister drawback to the advancement of American letters — this professor, in a work on the English novel, hangs an unbecoming and unnecessary halo above the head of Mark Twain, finds moral tracts in every fiction, and leaves out entirely two or three of the really important novelists of the present day. Criticism, so practised, becomes an exercise in hieroglyphics, a requiem high mass at 4 o'clock in the afternoon — anything save a sane, intelligent effort to get at a writer's intention and to judge him as to whether he has achieved it, well or ill.

This effort Mencken makes in "A Book of Prefaces," dealing with Conrad, Dreiser, and Huneker, with an added chapter on "Puritanism as a Literary Force." It is a book of creative criticism in a sense unusual in American letters. It is an assault upon the cultural pharisaism which leads us to ballyhoo third-rate Russian, French, Italian, Japanese, and Hindu poets and novelists, issuing them in translations with roy-croftie bindings to lie unopened on library tables, while men nearer home, eminently more deserving of artistic consideration, are neglected or, what is worse, pilloried by smug reviewers. It is a work of appraisal and appreciation by a man who can write coherently and with effect, who knows several literatures and yet is not a don, who has taste and discrimination and yet is not a prig, who can pass judgment on a writer and yet not assume that the destiny of the race is thus determined by his words, and who can be a critic and yet be human.

To get the full force of his writings, of course, one must at least know the A B C's of literary history, but one must also know that this is the twentieth century. A pedant will miss

as many of his allusions as will a parlour maid or a chauffeur. He has, to be sure, his share of intellectual fourflush; he, too, is an American. He shows, at times, an offensive intellectual arrogance and a vainglorious trick of parading names of unfamiliar writers through the pages of his discourse. He has an intolerance as definite in its way as the intolerance of the Methodism and Puritanism he fights. He has a sentimental bias for the melancholy as against the joyous temperament. At heart he is a Puritan, as was Nietzsche and is Shaw. And he has his regular fling at *bourgeoisie* baiting, a pastime he pleasingly alternates with badgering the "intellectuals." It is great fun for him and for his readers. With an adjective and a noun he can strip a Chautauqua pundit of every stitch of his pretentious accoutrements and leave him shivering in the altogether, a pathetic and ridiculous spectacle.

He is at best as a critic in dealing with prose. He has little patience with or appreciation for poetry and with characteristic impromptu he is likely to consign to the limbo of his estimates, along with a hack versifier, a poet of high calibre, whose methods and aims he does not immediately apperceive. It is this intolerance, these snap and final judgments, this delight in an occasional display of cultural *bijouterie*, that lessen his stature as a critic. Some of us hope that in the long run he will shed that fault and gain a trifle more of poise and balance, without losing thereby his gem-like quality of phrase.

This consummation, in fact, he has in a large measure achieved in "A Book of Prefaces." His occasional sacrifice of clear perspective to the pungent line is here absent. He has approached Conrad, Dreiser, and Huneker with an unwonted chastity of critical materials and given an equitable estimate and a keen analysis of the artistic aims of these men. He inspires one with a desire to find pleasure in their writings, or, if one is already familiar with them, to cherish a more intimate acquaintance with them. This is, of course, the mission — if

he have a mission — of the critic. He perhaps reads in Dreiser and Conrad that which is not, a habit he abominates in others. But that is only one more evidence that there is no such thing as purely objective criticism. A critic invariably treats of himself in considering the work of others, and he is worth while only in so far as he is of intellectual interest and consequence as a man.

Mencken has rooted lustily for Dreiser ever since the latter first appeared upon the literary scene. He early discerned in the Indianan a new and vital force in American letters, a sincere and unflinching artist, pledged to present faithfully life as he had seen it. And when Dreiser was down and gasping under the onslaught of public and professional critics, Mencken stepped in, wielding his mighty cutlass, decapitated some half dozen of the more weighty anthropophagites, and drove the rest to cover. The fight is not over, but Mencken is holding them at bay and others have enlisted in his aid. He knows Dreiser's faults, of which there are many, and he points them out in his book, but he also knows Dreiser's merits. . . .

III

I unburdened myself of the foregoing dithyrambs in the course of an article in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune* during November, 1917. When I came to write the present paper I thought I should be able to sandwich that earlier discourse into this one. I find that it cannot be done. It is couched in a definite key and tempo which I cannot at this moment recatch, and a paragraph from it juxtaposed with a paragraph I should now write must result in a forbidding mixture of jerky rhythms. But since, after three years, the parts I have reprinted still represent in essentials my impressions of Mr. Mencken's work I have decided to let them stand. The article was hortatory rather than expository and its aim was to increase, so far as possible, Mr. Mencken's audience. He had

not at that time the following he now enjoys; and his importance as a literary figure, while just as real, was not then so apparent as it is now. He has meanwhile given us an important and vastly interesting philological work, "The American Language"; a new book of criticism, "Prejudices: First Series"; an ingenious satire, "In Defense of Women"; and in collaboration with George Jean Nathan, a satirical buffoonery, "Heliogabalus," and a study of the American mind in action, "The American Credo." He has been praised in the *Mercure de France* and in various other continental reviews, as well as in such English periodicals as the *Athenæum*. With these increasing evidences of foreign favour, the phenomenon of our national literary self-consciousness has again begun to manifest itself, and American critics and reviewers who were formerly afraid to mention his name above a whisper now warble about him dulcetly. Even his most active opponents, witnessing the wholesale desertion from their ranks, have tacitly admitted his victory.

It must be for Mr. Mencken a source of amusement and at the same time a little embarrassing to have among these new adherents men to whom he is unalterably opposed in idea and in habit. For he wishes to function freely, to dance, as Nietzsche phrased it, with arms and legs. To this end he refuses to frequent literary societies, declines to meet authors, and avoids contact with all public organizations and persons, including even those who have his support. He is interested, not in making converts, but only in amusing himself at the fascinating game of juggling ideas. He believes, and rightly, that the *cénacle* is the incubator of the *cliché*, that apostles make the most provoking thought a platitude. He is sceptical of all things, even of the fleeting truth as he sees it. He believes that nothing is unconditionally true and he is opposed to every positive statement of truth and to every one who states it. All his work, whether it be burlesque, serious criti-

cism, or mere casual controversy, is always directed against one thing: empty pretension. To expose shams, unmask hypocrisy, ridicule solemn delusions—this is at once his vocation and his hobby. His weapon is adapted to the enemy and to the fight. And he loves the fight itself, not for the victory it brings, the triumph of his ideas that it holds out as stakes, but for the stimulating exercise it entails, the sense of strength in logic, the feeling of competency in verbal parries, the sheer joy of combat. He has no doctrine to spread. None of them seem to him worth fighting for. He believes that all the larger human problems are insoluble and that life is quite meaningless, a spectacle without purpose or moral.

Thus a thoroughgoing sceptic, he is yet a man of strong intellectual concepts and prejudices, mostly negative. And in the statement of these concepts and prejudices, one finds him most provocative. None of them are especially new, many of them are actually axiomatic; but his manner of expressing them, the examples he adduces in support of them are unfailingly interesting. In an expansive moment he once wrote to me:

I am against all theologians, professors, editorial-writers, right-thinkers and reformers. I am against patriotism because it demands the acceptance of propositions that are obviously imbecile, *e. g.*, that an American Presbyterian is the equal of Anatole France, Brahms or Ludendorff. I am against democracy for the same reason: it is indistinguishable from lunacy. To me democracy seems to be founded wholly upon the inferior man's envy of his superior—of the man who is having a better time. That is also the origin of Puritanism. I detest all such things. I acknowledge that many men are my superiors, and always defer to them. In such a country as the United States, of course, few of that sort are to be encountered. Hence my apparent foreignness: most of the men I respect are foreigners. But this is not my fault. I'd be glad to respect Americans if they were respectable. George Washington was. I admire him greatly.

I detest men who meanly admire mean things, *e. g.*, fellows who think that Roosevelt was a great man. I also detest poltroons—that is, men who seek unfair advantages in combat. In my gladiatorial days on the *Baltimore Sun* I never attacked a single man who was without means of

> No!! See original, in Letters of H.L.H.
p 187, letter to Burton Rascoe.

hitting back. I controlled space that was dedicated to any one who wanted to attack me. No man was ever refused this space. My objection to Americans is that they like to fight with the enemy strapped to the board. Hence the persecution of Germans during the war, the robbery of helpless alien business men, the American Legion, the American Protective League, the attack on Spain, the wars with Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, etc. This poltroonery is not essentially American, it is simply democratic; the inferior man always shows it.

I am, tested by the prevailing definitions, a bad American. I do not believe this country has the glorious future that patrioteers talk of. It will probably remain second rate for a long while—a mere milch cow for England. Most of the American ideals, so called, that I know of seem to me to be idiotic. If they were sound, I'd probably jump into the nearest river. The sort of country they conjure up would be simply a paradise of bounders, forward-lookers, right-thinkers, all sorts of stupid cowards. I do not believe that civilized life is possible under a democracy.

I am an extreme libertarian and believe in absolutely free speech, especially for anarchists, Socialists and other such fools. Once those fellows were free to gabble *ad lib.*, democracy would be reduced to an absurdity; the mob would go stark crazy. I am against jailing men for their opinions, or, for that matter, for anything else. I am opposed to religions, because all of them seek to throttle opinion. I do not believe in education, and am glad I never went to a university. Beyond the rudiments, it is impossible to teach anything. All the rest the student acquires himself. His teacher merely makes it difficult for him. I never learned anything in school.

My scepticism is intolerably offensive to the normal American man; only the man under strong foreign influences sees anything in it save a gross immorality. If the notions of the right-thinkers are correct, then such stuff as mine (and particularly such stuff as I shall write hereafter) ought to be put down by law. I believe that, in the long run, it *will* be put down by law—that free speech is too dangerous to democracy to be permitted. But I surely do not complain about that. The Puritans have a right to determine the laws of their country. And I reject the sentimentality that the minority also has rights.

Here, indeed, we have a man dancing with arms and legs. And while he dances we may be permitted to take notes upon the performance. It will first be observed that while Mr. Mencken fancies he is an alien, he is actually as essentially American (as Vincent O'Sullivan has pointed out) as pumpkin pie. In no other country in the world could such a man be

imagined. He is indubitably a natural product of American traditions, American training, American character,—a product, perhaps, of reaction against these things, but still plainly a product. This delusion of un-Americanism on the part of Americans who have risen above the mob is common enough. There is a notion among critics that Edgar Allan Poe is unrepresentative of America, that he is essentially French. That superstition has been admirably exploded by Remy de Gourmont, who said of Poe:

“Ses ‘canards’ sont des récréations et des expériences psychologiques. Cependant on y découvre des traces du goût particulier des Américains pour la réclame, l’affiche, la publicité barbare, le journalisme extravagant. Poe est un Américain bien plus représentatif de l’Amérique qu’Emerson ou Walt Whitman. Son esprit à des côtés pratiques. Dénudé de littérature, il eût été un étonnant homme d’affaires, un ‘lanceur’ de premier ordre.”

Much the same thing and with equal truth may be said of Mr. Mencken. There is in his work a bellicose extravagance peculiarly American, arising to meet a peculiarly American need. Just as I have long thought of Anatole France as the only living Christian, I think of Mr. Mencken as probably the only living American patriot. It will be seen that his interests are, paradoxically enough, ethical (or anti-ethical if you so choose to call them). His ideas are in the main ideas in antagonism to the limited outlook, the corrosive commercialism, the puritanical bias, the stultifying correctness of American life—conditions which make not only for the death of the creative spirit in the arts, but actually render life itself a drab and cowardly preparation for death. His criticism, then, is, at bottom, a criticism of ideas, not of books; and whatever his sceptical professions, he cannot help half-heartedly hope that, through efforts such as his, stupidity, narrowness, hypocrisy, and mean living will be in some trifling way decreased, so that intelligent and honest artists may live their lives in These States without interference by the police. The artist in every

country has, indeed, a difficult time enough. The milieu of Baudelaire was as hostile to him as the milieu of Poe was to him; the prosecution of Flaubert was as persistent as the persecution of Dreiser; Huysmans and Verlaine, to get a hearing denied them by the representative French magazines, had to give their stuff as fillers for the back pages of a financial review. But in this country alone, it seems, it is difficult for an artist to get recognition even years after his death; in this country alone is the artist held in almost universal contempt. Mr. Mencken's war upon this condition is so insistent that it takes on the nature of a berserker rage. He is quick to recognize an artist and he fights for him usually by attacking his enemies, often leaving to others the more academic work of expounding the artist's virtues. He knows that the public is always in favour of the prosecution, that it likes criticism only in so far as it is a good show. His own audience is small and perhaps somewhat superior, but it enjoys a good combat as much as any other, and he invariably provides it.

As a critic of definite books, particularly of novels and essays, he is probably as often right as is any man who engages in that most subjective of all varieties of creative writing, criticism. He has good sense, his tastes are excellent, his discernment of values keen. As a critic of poetry he is, I think, probably the worst in the world. Poetry, even more than painting, is his æsthetic blind spot: his favourite poem is Lizette Woodworth Reese's "Tears," and he once made in all seriousness the astounding statement that no one ever wrote good poetry after the age of twenty-five. In poetry he prefers the sentimental — if he cares for it at all, which is not often. But we must take the bitter with the sweet. Sainte-Beuve was notoriously inept in his remarks on Flaubert, Balzac, and Baudelaire: Brunetière was an anachronism, belonging rightly to the seventeenth century; Lemaître was too classical in his tastes; Anatole France ridiculed the Symbolists as diseased

poets; Remy de Gourmont was antipathetic to any one who professed Christianity; Georg Brandes has anti-social and pessimistic prejudices; James Huneker, choosing always to write sympathetically and illuminatingly upon subjects which interest him, is probably as near an approach to a perfect critic as we have had.

I wish to recur again to Mr. Mencken's style before I pass on to his biography. Academic tradition in England and consequently in the United States has always resisted any attempt to introduce flexibility into the language, to enrich it with idiom, to keep it pulsatingly alive. There are purists in this country who insist upon the retention of grammatical usages and word forms long after they have passed out of the common speech. Anglophile traditionalists have even insisted upon the abandonment of Americanisms which have a peculiarly American savour. The conservators of "correct usage" in the United States consider any departure from the embalmed speech of the text-books, any use of the rich and sprightly words of everyday commerce, a breach of taste and the writer thereof a vulgar fellow. Yet should you ask them if M. Anatole France of the Académie Française is a great stylist, they would unquestionably answer in the affirmative. And M. Anatole France of the Académie Française employs slang, the idiomatic expressions of the streets, and journalistic coinage whenever he feels like it — which is often: I counted twelve instances in one page of "M. Bergeret à Paris." The number of slang expressions which became the common property of novelists and academicians in France during the war was so large that a special dictionary of them was brought out. . . . Mr. Mencken has always been a little suspect by Americans of the professorial sort for doing what the more important French writers have always done. This most vigorous of American writers has been patronized as not exactly nice.

IV

Henry Louis Mencken was born in Baltimore on September 12, 1880. On his father's side he inherits Frisian, Scandinavian, Saxon, Polish, Scotch, Irish and English blood, and on his mother's side he is lowland Bavarian and Hessian, with probably some French admixture. The Mencken family was first heard of in Oldenburg; the name is Frisian. The family early made its way in the Hansa towns and produced commercial magnates, diplomats, theologians, doctors of law, privy councillors and professors. In the seventeenth century two Menckens, cousins, emigrated to Saxony, attracted by the university at Leipzig, and founded the Saxon branch of the family. Otto Mencken, toward the end of the century, established the *Acta Eruditorum* there, the first learned review in the Holy Roman Empire. His son, Johann Burkhardt, wrote in 1715 a book that was famous on the Continent throughout the eighteenth century — "De Charlatanerie Eruditorium," a furious attack upon professorial bombast. Lüder Mencken was an academic magnifico in Leipzig in the time of Johann Sebastian Bach — a celebrated jurist and professor of law. Anastasius Ludwig Mencken was a privy councillor to Frederick the Great. His daughter, Wilhelmina Luisa, was the mother of Bismarck. The family went to pieces during the Napoleonic wars. Mr. Mencken's grandfather left Leipzig to settle in America in 1848. He was not a revolutionist refugee; he cleared out because he thought the revolution would succeed.

Mr. Mencken's father was in the tobacco business in Baltimore. The young Mencken attended Knapp's Institute, a private school, and was graduated from the Baltimore Polytechnic at the early age of sixteen. His father wanted him to enter his business and offered to send him to Johns Hopkins University, which offer he declined on the ground that if he were destined for business it was a waste of time to attend a univer-

Ventures *into* Verse

Being Various BALLADS, BALLADES, RONDEAUX,
TRIOLETS, SONGS, QUATRAINS, ODES *and*
ROUNDELS ♡ All rescued from *the*
POTTERS' FIELD *of* Old Files *and* here
Given DECENT BURIAL ♡ [*Peace to Their Ashes*]

BY

Henry Louis Mencken

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS & OTHER THINGS
By CHARLES S. GORDON & JOHN SIEGEL



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OPUS 1.

sity. His father died when he was eighteen and shortly afterward Mencken got a job as a reporter on the old Baltimore *Morning Herald*. He was successively Sunday editor, city editor, and at 25 years managing editor of that newspaper. In 1906 he became editor-in-chief of the *Evening Herald* and when the *Herald* suspended went to the Baltimore *Sun*, serving variously as Sunday editor, dramatic critic and editorial writer. In 1911 he started his Free Lance column in the *Evening Sun* and ran it until 1916. It had a local success and made him the town anti-Christ. There has never been anything quite like it in any other American newspaper. He had an absolutely free hand and he told the horrible truth as he saw it.

He began writing a monthly literary article for the *Smart Set* in 1908. In 1914 he and George Jean Nathan and two associates acquired the magazine. He is unmarried and lives with his mother and sister in Baltimore.

THE AMERICAN CRITIC¹

BY VINCENT O'SULLIVAN

In the United States at present there is a vast deal of what may be called academic criticism. Considerable knowledge is often at the base of it; it is not eccentric, it is well-behaved, it is prudent, it is the output of a citizen who has a reputation for decorum to keep up, it is written and punctuated carefully, and published luxuriously. It is not easily to be distinguished from the mass of the same kind of writing published in other lands. The worst thing about it is that it is vacuous by dint of respectability. Its bland impersonal presentations, sometimes haughty, urbane at times, often irritable and always dogmatic, have absolutely no effect on the poets and novelists of the United States. Some of them may read it, some of them may even believe in it. But influence them it does not. It couldn't. It is too lifeless.

Among all this criticism there is one critic. His name is H. L. Mencken. He may provoke animosity, he may rouse protestations even vehement, but he is read, he is attended to. With foundations perhaps solider than any solemn professor of them all, he is not solemn. He is not bored: whether or not he approves of the American welter, it does not bore him. He attacks his material with gusto. A criticism by him is as absorbing as a well-planned short story. Just as much art goes into it. Besides, he is genuinely American — only out of the States could just that accent, that way of looking at things, come. Such weeklies as the *New Republic* and some of the

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other critical papers published in America have nothing specifically American about them. They might be the work of the staff of the London *Spectator* or *Nation* transported to America and set to writing on American topics. But Mr. Mencken does not derive from England or from anywhere else but the U. S. A. He is as peculiarly American as pumpkin-pie or a Riker-Hegeman drug-store. In this sense he is the first American critic, except Poe. For Lowell, E. P. Whipple, W. C. Brownell, and so many others, what are they, after all, but products of European, and chiefly English, culture, who have continued the European tests on the American body, even as Henry James did so mistakenly?

Mr. Mencken tests America by America. To say truth, he treats Columbia rather roughly. He takes liberties with her — Oh, Lord, yes, he takes all the liberties in the world. Her house is his own, you see. If he sometimes takes her on his knee and treats her to a little boisterous fondling, ere long he has her up and hits her a shrewd whack over the shoulders or a box on the ear. But behind it all one feels there is considerable affection: it is in the manner of Him who chasteneth because He loveth.

His book, "Prejudices: First Series," I have found the most interesting book of criticism which has appeared since George Moore's "Impressions and Opinions." Some of the subjects are not so important as Moore's, but that is not Mencken's fault: you don't find Verlaines and Degases and Manets and Antoine's Théâtre Libre fresh and unknown every day. Mencken takes what is under his hand, and, without Moore's material, makes his book as interesting as Moore's. Not that his style or method resembles Moore's in the least. He is more like W. E. Henley in these, and he is most like himself.

One has to be an American, or at least to know American conditions very well, to estimate at its just value criticism so obviously fearless and sincere. In reading "Prejudices," as

in most of Mr. Mencken's books, you get not only a view of American literature as it exists at present, but views opening on all sides into American life. No country is so much in need just now of impartial criticism *from the inside* as the United States. Such criticism as the French and English have given themselves almost since they became articulate, America has never had. There has been a vague belief that it was unpatriotic to show the dark side of the American state. What there was of this kind of criticism came from foreigners such as Dickens, and it was accordingly discounted. In Europe the novel has been a great instrument of criticism, but it is only quite lately, with Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Abraham Cahan and one or two others, that the American novel has come to anything like frank and sincere terms with American life—the life led by the millions of plain people. Such novelists have had to make their way painfully against furious opposition; from no authorized source have they received any help.

Alone among the critics, Mr. Mencken fought their battles for them against obtuseness, against malignity and hypocrisy and against that tepid sentimentalism which is, I do believe, the national vice; and if things are today a little more easy for the novelist who wishes to be veracious, it is chiefly to him that thanks are due—to him and to Dreiser, who has had church and bench and bar, police and law and order, and most other phantasms and formulas mobilized against him for nigh on twenty years, and has refused to be bullied and cowed. One has to be an American to estimate properly the innovation of Dreiser and his courage, for lifted out of the American atmosphere there is nothing very startling about his novels (his affiliation really is to the French Naturalists), and a European of some culture reading them would find them the expression of a healthy mind, not in the least anarchic or revolutionary, and with nothing particularly new about them

but their subject-matter — just that rendering of plain American life which I have spoken of.

But it is impossible to regard them thus calmly in America, as Mr. Mencken, who has had to give and take many a blow in Dreiser's cause, knows well. There, Dreiser is a banner for all those who want to do something else than produce pale novels for pink people like those of the Harold Bell Wrights, the Gene Stratton Porters and the Sydnor Harrisons. Mr. Mencken writes: "It is not the artistic merit and dignity of a novel that makes for its success in the United States. The criterion of truth applied to it is not the criterion of an artist, but that of a newspaper editorial writer; the question is not, Is it in accord with the profoundest impulses and motives of humanity? but Is it in accord with the current pishposh?" What, besides the all-pervading sentimentalism, goes to determine the judgment of the editorial writer, and of a perhaps more influential person when it comes to books, the municipal librarian, I do not pretend to know. My own book, "The Good Girl," which has led a blameless and quiet life in England for seven or eight years — only the other day I had a letter from an aged lady in Brighton, who told me she had read it twice with great profit — was barred out of the public libraries of New York and Boston, and doubtless other cities, when it was published in my native land. A few years ago a new edition was issued by a Boston publisher, and the poor old book was treated cruelly in the press for indecency, immorality, and the whole orchestra; and it is still barred from the public libraries. As Mr. Mencken says: "A literary craftsman in America is never judged by his work alone." There must be something on the side. Sarah Bernhardt or Mme. Melba, or somebody equally competent must look on the work and pronounce it good. The late Theodore Roosevelt was a great resource. His opinions might afflict the judicious, but a book to which he gave clearing-papers sailed triumphantly

over the stormy seas of the department-stores and anchored in the haven of the municipal library.

Against patrioteering, against fraud and violence and tyranny disguised as freedom, against the hand of the oppressor wrapped in the cap of liberty, against words that are froth, against a crafty hypocrisy which is the death of all originality in art, against uniformity, against the dead level, against erecting the mediocre opinions of the majority into canons of art, against a mean flattery of the mob and playing down to it — against these Mr. Mencken has always nobly and bravely contended, and doubtless will contend for many years more, for he is still a young man, and these evils are likely to last our time. In fact, a sensible person does not contend against them in the hope of removing them, for they have been always in the world and will probably remain in some shape or other till the world is done. — no, but in the hope of mitigating them, and there is some encouragement for this. There is no question that owing to the campaigns of Mr. Mencken and one or two others, the American poet and novelist and, to a certain extent, the dramatist is infinitely freer to develop his work logically and veraciously than he was ten years ago.



H. L. MENCKEN.

From a Pencil Drawing by Willem Wirtz.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY F. C. HENDERSON

I. BOOKS BY H. L. MENCKEN

I

Ventures into Verse / Being Various Ballads, Ballades, Rondeaux, / Triolets, Songs, Quatrains, Odes and / Roundels, All rescued from the / Potters' Field of Old Files and here / Given Decent Burial [Peace to Their Ashes] / By / Henry Louis Mencken / With Illustrations & Other Things / By Charles S. Gordon & John Siegel / (*Publishers' Device*) / Marshall, Beek & Gordon, New / York, London, Toronto, Sydney / Baltimore. First (and Last) Edition / MCMIII.

46 pp., 7½ x 4⅞; brown paper, with red and white label.

CONTENTS: Forty poems, chiefly written before 1900 and reprinted from the *Bookman*, *Life*, *Leslie's Weekly*, the *New England Magazine*, the *National Magazine* and the *Baltimore Morning Herald*.

[*Out of print*]

The same.

Binders' boards, with red back, and red and white label.

[*Out of print*]

II

George Bernard Shaw / His Plays / By / Henry L. Mencken / (*Device*) / Boston and London / John W. Luce & Co. / 1905.

107 pp., 7½ x 5½; blue cloth, with white, red and black labels.

CONTENTS: Preface, By Way of Introduction, The Shaw Plays, The Novels and Other Writings, Biographical and Statistical, Shakespeare and Shaw.

NOTE: The table of contents mentions Major Barbara, but the last play actually dealt with is John Bull's Other Island. [*Out of print*]

III

The Philosophy of / Friedrich Nietzsche / By Henry L. Mencken / (*Four line quotation from Schopenhauer*) / (*Publisher's device*) / Boston / Luce and Company / MCMVIII.

xiii+325 pp., 8 x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$; maroon cloth with gilt stamping; front. port. of Nietzsche by Hans Olde.

CONTENTS: Introduction. I. Nietzsche the Man: Boyhood and Youth, The Beginnings of the Philosopher, Blazing a New Path, The Prophet of the Superman, The Philosopher and the Man. II. Nietzsche the Philosopher: Dionysus vs. Apollo, The Origin of Morality, Beyond Good and Evil, The Superman, Eternal Recurrence, Christianity, Truth, Civilization, Women and Marriage, Government, Crime and Punishment, Education, Sundry Ideas, Nietzsche vs. Wagner. III. Nietzsche the Prophet: Nietzsche's Origins, Nietzsche as a Teacher, Nietzsche and His Critics. IV. Books and Articles About Nietzsche.

NOTE: The title is incorrect on the back, thus: The Philosophy of Nietzsche. And reprinted. [Out of print]

The same.

London / T. Fisher Unwin / MCMVIII.

xiii+ 321 pp., red cloth with gilt stamping.

NOTE: From the American plates, but with Books and Articles About Nietzsche omitted, though not deleted from the table of contents.

The same.

Third Edition. / Boston / Luce and Company / 1913.

xiii+304 pp., maroon cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Same as above, but with various changes in the text, a Preface to the Third Edition added, Nietzsche as a Teacher and Books and Articles about Nietzsche omitted, Nietzsche's Origins and Nietzsche and His Critics rewritten, How to Study Nietzsche and Index added, and front. port. of Nietzsche omitted.

NOTE: Title on back corrected.

IV

The Artist / A Drama Without Words / By / H. L. Mencken / John W. Luce & Company / Boston, 1912. (*Title page in border by F. Barros.*)

33 pp., 6 x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$; brown mottled boards, dark brown stamping.

NOTE: Reprinted from the *Bohemian Magazine* for Dec., 1909; also afterward printed in the *Smart Set* for Aug., 1916, and in *A Book of Burlesque* (cf. VI). [Out of print]

The same.

The Artist / A Satire in One Act / By H. L. Mencken / (*Copyright notices*) / New York, 1917.

12 pp., 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$; paper.

NOTE: An acting edition for the use of theatres presenting the play. All even numbered pages blank. For the Producer added.

[Out of print]

V

A Little Book / In C Major / By H. L. Mencken / [Opus 11] / New York / John Lane Company / MCMXVI.

79 pp., 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5; red cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: A collection of 226 epigrams, chiefly reprinted from the *Smart Set*. [Out of print]

VI

A Book of / Burlesques / By H. L. Mencken / [Opus 12] / Author of "A Little Book in C Major," etc. / New York / John Lane Company / MCMXVI.

253 pp., 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5; red cloth, with gilt stamping; folding chart at rear.

CONTENTS: Prefatory note, Death: a Philosophical Discussion, From the Programme of a Concert, The Wedding: A Stage Direction, The Visionary, The Artist: a Drama Without Words, Seeing the World, From the Memoirs of the Devil, Litanies for the Overlooked, Asepsis: a Deduction in *Scherzo* Form, Tales of the Moral and Pathological, Epithalamium, Portraits of Americans, Panoramas of People, The New Soule, A Genealogical Chart of the Uplift.

NOTE: The Artist was printed separately in 1912 (cf. IV). Seeing the World is a slightly revised version of Preface in the Socratic Manner in Europe after 8.15 (cf. IIa). [Out of print]

The same.

A Book of / Burlesques / By H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device*) / Published at the Borzoi, New York, by / Alfred A. Knopf. / (1920.)

237 pp., 5 x 7½; blue cloth with gilt and blind stamping; no chart.

CONTENTS: Same as above, but with a new prefatory note, with Epithalamium, Portraits of Americans, The New Soule and a Genealogical Chart of the Uplift omitted, and with The Jazz Webster, The Old Subject, Vers Libre and Homeopathics added.

NOTE: The Jazz Webster, The Old Subject and Homeopathics are chiefly taken from A Little Book in C Major (*cf.* V). In a few copies p. 198 omitted. [Out of print]

The same.

CONTENTS: Same as above, but with Patriots added to Panoramas of People, and Typographical Error of a Hopeful Character, Veneration, Portrait of the Methodist Heaven, Patriotic Note and Liturgical added to Homeopathics.

NOTE: On reverse of title: New revised edition, Second printing, April, 1920.

VII

A Book of Prefaces / By H. L. Mencken / [Opus 13] / (*Publisher's device*) / New York, Alfred A. Knopf, MCMXVII.

283 pp. 7¾ x 5; blue cloth with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Preface, Joseph Conrad, Theodore Drieser, James Huneker, Puritanism as a Literary Force. [Out of print]

The same.

Second (Revised) Edition / MCMXVIII.

288 pp.

[Out of print]

CONTENTS: Same as above, but with various changes in the text, Preface omitted, Preface to the Second Edition added, and Index added.

The same.

Third Edition / MCMXX.

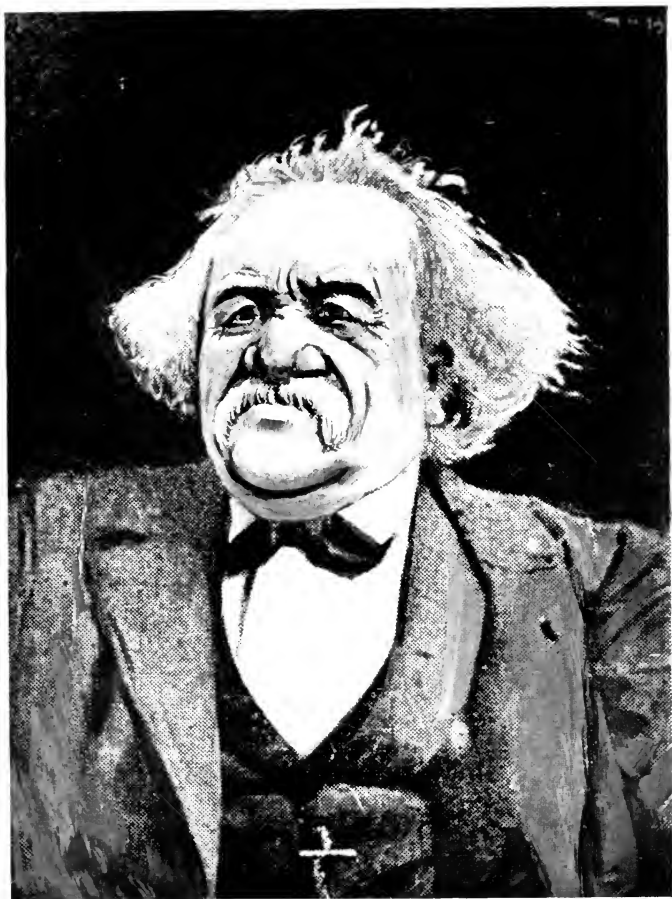
CONTENTS: Same as above, but with new preface.

VIII

Damn! A Book of Calumny / By H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device in orange ink*) / Philip Goodman Company / New York, Nineteen eighteen.

103 pp. 7¼ x 4½; light blue cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Pater Patriæ, The Reward of the Artist, The Heroic Con-



THE SUBCONSCIOUS MENCKEN.
An Inductive Synthesis by McKee Barclay.

sidered, The Burden of Humor, The Saving Grace, Moral Indignation, Stable-Names, The Jews, The Comstockian Premiss, The Labial Infamy, A True Ascetic, On Lying, History, The Curse of Civilization, Eugenics, The Jocose Gods, War, Moralist and Artist, Actors, The Crowd, An American Philosopher, Clubs, Fidelis ad Urnum, A Theological Mystery, The Test of Truth, Literary Indecencies, Virtuous Vandalism, A Footnote on the Duel of Sex, Alcohol, Thoughts on the Voluptuous, The Holy Estate, Dichtung und Wahrheit, Wild Shots, Beethoven, The Tone Art, Zoos, On Hearing Mozart, The Road to Doubt, A New Use for Churches, The Root of Religion, Free Will, Quid Est Veritas?, The Doubter's Reward, Before the Altar, The Mask, Pia Veneziana poi Cristiani, Off Again On Again, Theology, Exempli Gratia.

NOTE: Twice reprinted without change.

[*Out of print*]

The same.

Philip Goodman, New York, 1918.

139 pp., $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$; light red cloth, with black stamping.

CONTENTS: Same as above, with Preface added, and a few changes in the text.

NOTE: Marked Fourth (Revised) Edition and Opus 14 on the slip-cover.

[*Out of print*]

The same.

A Book of Calumny / [First Printed as "Damn"] / By H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device*) / Published at the Borzoi, New York, by / Alfred A. Knopf. (1919.)

139 pp., $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$; dark blue cloth, with gilt and blind stamping.

CONTENTS: Same as above, but with Preface omitted. [*Out of print*]

IX

In Defence / of Women / By H. L. Mencken / Philip Goodman, New York, 1918.

218 pp., $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$; blue cloth, with yellow stamping.

CONTENTS: The Maternal Instinct, Woman's Intelligence, The Masculine Bag of Tricks, Intuition, The Duel of Sex, The Feminine Attitude, Beauty, Woman's Equipment, Honor, A Conspiracy of Silence, Marriage, The Process of Courtship, The Actual Husband, The Unattainable Ideal, The Effect on the Race, Compulsory Marriage, Extra-Legal Devices, Late Marriage, An Increase in Benefits, Disparate Unions, The Charm of Mystery, Woman as Wife, Marriage and the Law, The Emancipated Housewife, Equal Suffrage, The Woman Voter, The Suffragette, A Mythical Dare-Devil, The Origin of a Delusion, Women as Martyrs,

Pathological Effects, Christianity, The Ethics of Women, The Transvaluation of Values, The Future of Marriage, The War and Marriage, Apologia.

NOTE: Error in publisher's name on title page. Once reprinted, with Ppilip corrected to Philip. [Out of print]

The same.

(*Publisher's device*) / Published at the Borzoi, New York, by / Alfred A. Knopf. (1919.)

7 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5; dark blue cloth, with gilt and blind stamping.

CONTENTS: Same as above.

NOTE: Third Printing on slip-over.

X

The / American Language / A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States /. By / H. L. Mencken /. (*Publisher's device.*) / New York / Alfred A. Knopf / MCMXIX.

374 pp., 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$; dark blue cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Preface, By Way of Introduction, The Beginnings of American, The Period of Growth, American and English Today, Tendencies in American, The Common Speech, Differences in Spelling, Proper Names in America, Miscellanea, Bibliography, List of Words and Phrases, General Index.

NOTE: Edition limited to 1,500 numbered copies, printed from type, including 25 signed by the author. [Out of print]

XI

Prejudices / First Series / By H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device*) / Published at the Borzoi, New York, by / Alfred A. Knopf. (1919.)

254 pp., 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$; blue cloth, with gilt and blind stamping.

CONTENTS: Criticism of Criticism of Criticism, The Late Mr. Wells, Arnold Bennett, The Dean, Professor Veblen, The New Poetry Movement, The Heir of Mark Twain, Hermann Sudermann, George Ade, The Butte Bashkirtseff, Six Members of the Institute, The Genealogy of Etiquette, The American Magazine, The Ulster Polonius, An Unheeded Law-Giver, The Blushful Mystery, George Jean Nathan, Portrait of an Immortal Soul, Jack London, Among the Avatars, Three American Immortals, Index. [Out of print]

The same.

(1920.)

NOTE: A few slight changes. On reverse of title: Second Printing,
January, 1920. [Out of print]

The same.

(1920.)

NOTE: On reverse of title: Third Printing, April, 1920.

XII

Prejudices / Second Series / By H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device*) / Published at the Borzoi, New York, by / Alfred A. Knopf (1920).

265 pp. $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$; blue cloth, with gilt and blind stamping.

CONTENTS: The National Letters, Roosevelt: An Autopsy, The Sahara of the Bozart, The Divine Afflatus, Exeunt Omnes, Scientific Examination of a Popular Virtue, The Allied Arts, The Cult of Hope, The Dry Millenium, Appendix on a Tender Theme, Index.

II. BOOKS BY H. L. MENCKEN AND OTHERS

Ia

Men *versus* The Man / A Correspondence / Between / Robert Rives La Monte, Socialist / and / H. L. Mencken, Individualist / (*Publisher's device*) / New York / Henry Holt and Company / 1910.

252 pp., $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$; red cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Introduction, six letters by La Monte and six replies by Mencken, Index. [Out of print]

IIa

Europe after 8.15 / By / H. L. Mencken / George Jean Nathan / Willard Huntington Wright / with Decorations / By Thomas H. Benton / (*Publisher's device*) / New York, John Lane Company / Toronto, Bell & Cockburn / MCMXIV.

222 pp., $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$; yellow cloth, with blue and gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Preface in the Socratic Manner, Vienna, Munich, Berlin, London, Paris.

NOTE: Nathan wrote Paris and Berlin, Wright wrote Vienna and most of London, and Mencken wrote the Preface, Munich and the first and last parts of London. [Out of print]

IIIa

The Profession of / Journalism / A Collection of Articles on Newspaper Editing / and Publishing, Taken from the / Atlantic Monthly / Edited with an Introduction / and Notes by / Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, Ph. D. / Author of "Newspaper Writing and Editing" and "Types of News / Writing;" Professor of Journalism in the / University of Wisconsin / (*Publisher's device*) / The Atlantic Monthly Press / Boston, (1918).

292 pp., 7½ x 5; maroon cloth, with gilt and blind stamping.

NOTE: Newspaper Morals, by H. L. Mencken, pp. 52-67; reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* for March, 1914.

IVa

Heliogabalus / A Buffoonery in Three Acts / by H. L. Mencken and / George Jean Nathan / (*Publisher's device*) / New York, Alfred A. Knopf, MCMXX.

183 pp., 7⅞ x 5¼; blue cloth with gilt stamping.

NOTE: Edition limited to 2,000 numbered copies. [Out of print]

The same.

Japanese boards with parchment back, gilt stamping.

NOTE: Edition limited to 60 copies on Imperial Japan vellum, autographed by the authors; 50 copies only for sale. [Out of print]

The same.

Light brown paper, with brown stamping.

NOTE: Acting edition, none for sale. [Out of print]

Va

The American Credo / A Contribution Toward the Interpretation / of the National Mind / by George Jean Nathan / and

H. L. Mencken. / (*Publisher's device.*) / New York / Alfred A. Knopf / 1920.

191 pp., $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5$; black cloth, with gilt stamping.

CONTENTS: Preface, The American Credo.

NOTE: The Preface by Mencken; the Credo by Nathan.

Vib

A Modern Book of / Criticism / Edited with an Introduction by / Ludwig Lewisohn, Litt. D. / (*Device*) / Boni and Liveright / New York, 1919.

210 pp., $6\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$; green leatherette, with gilt stamping.

Homiletics of Criticism, The Critic's Function, and The Puritan and American Literature, by H. L. Mencken, pp. 167-173. The Modern Library.

III. BOOKS EDITED BY H. L. MENCKEN

Ib

The / Gist of Nietzsche / Arranged by Henry L. Mencken / Author of / The Philosophy of / Friedrich Nietzsche / (*Device*) / Boston / John W. Luce & Company / 1910. (*Title page in rule border.*)

60 pp., $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$; red cloth, with red, white and black labels.

Introduction and Biographical Note by the Editor.

[*Out of print*]

IIb

The Players' / Ibsen / A Doll's / House / Newly translated from the de- / finitive Dano-Norwegian text; Edited, / with introduction and notes, by / Henry L. Mencken / John W. Luce & Company / Boston, London. / (1909.)

150 pp., $6 \times 4\frac{3}{8}$; red cloth, with gilt stamping.

Introduction, Notes, and Books in English Dealing With "A Doll's House" by the editor.

[*Out of print*]

The same.

Little Eyolf. (1909.)

125 pp.

Introduction, Notes, and Books in English Dealing With
 "Little Eyolf" by the editor. [Out of print]

IIIb

Blanchette and the / Escape, Two Plays by / Brieux, With
 Preface / by H. L. Mencken. Trans- / lated from the French /
 by Frederick Eisemann. / John W. Luce & Company / Boston,
 MCMXIII.

240 pp., $7\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$; green cloth, with red, black and white
 labels.

Preface, pp. i-xxxvi, by the editor.

IVb

The Master Builder / Pillars of Society / Hedda Gabler /
 By Henrik Ibsen / Introduction by H. L. Mencken / (*Pub-
 lisher's device*) / Boni and Liveright, Inc. / Publishers, New
 York. (1918.)

305 pp., $6\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$; green leatherette, with gilt stamping.

Introduction, pp. v-xii, by the editor. The Modern Library.

Vb

Ben Kutcher's Illustrated Edition of / A / House of Pome-
 granates / and the story of / The Nightingale and the Rose /
 by Oscar Wilde / with an introduction by / H. L. Mencken /
 (*Publisher's device*) / New York / Moffat, Yard and Com-
 pany / 1918.

180 pp., $8\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$; chocolate boards, with yellow cloth
 back, and white and black labels.

Preface, pp. i-viii, by the editor.

VIIb

The Free Lance Books. I. / Edited by H. L. Mencken / Youth
 and Egolatry, by Pío Baroja / Translated from the Spanish /

by Jacob S. Fassett, Jr. / and Frances L. Phillips / (*Publisher's device*) / New York, Alfred A. Knopf, MCMXX.

265 pp., $7\frac{1}{4}$ by $4\frac{7}{8}$; red boards, with black cloth back; black stamping, and red and black label.

Introduction, pp. 11-20, by the editor.

The same.

II. / Ventures / In Common Sense / By E. W. Howe. / MCMXIX.

273 pp.; blue boards, with black cloth back, black stamping, and blue and black label.

Introduction, pp. 7-29, by the editor.

The same.

III. / The / Antichrist / By F. W. Nietzsche / Translated from the German / with an introduction by H. L. Mencken / MCMXX.

182 pp.; orange boards, with black cloth back, black stamping, and orange label.

Introduction, pp. 7-38, by the editor.

The same.

IV. / We Moderns: / Enigmas and Guesses / By Edwin Muir. / MCMXX.

244 pp., green boards, with black cloth back, black stamping and green and black label.

Introduction, pp. 7-21, by the editor.

VIIb

Tales of Mean Streets / By Arthur Morrison / Introduction by H. L. Mencken / (*Publisher's device*) / Boni and Liveright, Inc. / Publishers, New York (1920).

251 pp., $6\frac{1}{2}$ x $4\frac{1}{8}$; green leatherette, with gilt stamping.

Introduction, pp. v-ix, by the editor. The Modern Library.

IV. SOME CRITICISM OF H. L. MENCKEN

Alliteraricus, *pseud.*; To the Boche and the Pundit, *St. Louis Mirror*, April 25, 1919.

Bourne, Randolph: H. L. Mencken, *New Republic*, Nov. 24, 1917.

Boyd, Ernest A.: American Literature or Colonial? *Freeman*, March 17, 1920.

—, ———: A Modern Reactionary, *London Athenæum*, May 14, 1920.

Boynton, Percy H.: American Literature and the Tart Set, *Freeman*, April 17, 1920.

Cahan, Abraham: H. L. Mencken, *New York Daily Forward*, May 26, 1918.

De Casseres, Benjamin: H. L. Mencken and the Second Fall of Man, *New York Sun*, Oct. 20, 1919.

Frank, Waldo: Our America; New York (Boni & Liveright), 1919; pp. 192-3.

Gilman, Lawrence: The Book of the Month, *North American Review*, May, 1919.

H(ackett), F(rancis): The Living Speech, *New Republic*, May 31, 1919.

Harris, Frank: American Values: Howe and Mencken, *Pearson's Magazine*, Jan., 1919.

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H(uxley), A(ldous) L.: American Criticism, *London Athenæum*, Jan. 2, 1920.

Orchelle, R. L.: A Book of Rebellion and Regret, *Continental Times* (Berlin), May 3, 1918.

O'Sullivan, Vincent: La Littérature Américaine, *Mercure de France*, Jan. 16, 1919.

—, ———: The American Critic, *New Witness* (London), Nov. 28, 1919.

Sherman, Stuart P.: Mr. H. L. Mencken and the Jeune Fille, *Times Book Review* (New York), Dec. 7, 1919.

—, ———: Beautifying American Literature, *Nation* (New York), Nov. 29, 1917.

Spingarn, J. E.: American Criticism Today, *Nation* (London), April 17, 1920.

Untermeyer, Louis: A Preface To —, *Liberator*, May, 1918.

—, ———: The Review's the Thing, *Bellman*, July 15, 1916.

Vente, Elmar: Ein Rufer aus der Wüste, *New York Volkszeitung*, Jan. 16, 1918.

Wilson, Edmund, Jr.: Some Reviews of Job, *Dial*, April, 1920.

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